



# Amebiasis

## Facts about Amebiasis

Amebiasis is a disease caused by a one-cell parasite called *Entamoeba histolytica*. Diagnosis of amebiasis can be very difficult, since other parasites and cells can look very similar to it. Amebiasis is most common in people who live or have traveled to developing countries that have poor sanitary conditions.

### **Some important things to know about amebiasis infection are:**

- Symptoms of amebiasis can include loose stools, stomach pain, stomach cramping, and may alternate with periods of constipation or remission. Amebic dysentery is a severe form of amebiasis associated with stomach pain, bloody stools, fever and chills.
- About one in 10 people who are infected with amebiasis becomes sick. It usually takes one to four weeks from the time you ingest the parasite for you to become sick. You may also not have any symptoms of amebiasis, but still be a carrier of the disease.
- If you think you have amebiasis, go see your health care provider. Your health care provider will ask you to submit stool samples from several different days.
- A blood test is available, however, the test is recommended only when your health care provider thinks that your infection has invaded the wall of your intestine or some other organ of your body, such as your liver. One problem is the blood test may still be positive if you had amebiasis in the past, even if you are no longer infected now.
- In rare cases, amebiasis can invade the liver and forms an abscess. Even less commonly, it can spread to other parts of the body, such as the lungs or brain.

## The Spread of Amebiasis

### **Amebiasis can be spread by the following:**

- By putting anything into your mouth that has been contaminated with the stool of a person who is infected with amebiasis
- Oral-anal sexual contact
- By swallowing something, such as water or food, that is contaminated with amebiasis



- By touching and bringing to your mouth cysts (eggs) picked up from surfaces that are contaminated with amebiasis



## Treatment for Amebiasis

Several antibiotics are available to treat amebiasis. If you are infected but not sick, you will be given one antibiotic. You probably will be given two antibiotics if your infection has made you sick.



### **If you are infected with amebiasis:**

- Do not prepare or serve food
- Do not use public swimming pools

### **If you have diarrhea, do not go to work in:**

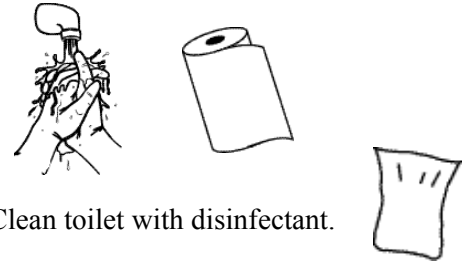
- food service
- childcare settings
- healthcare provider offices

## **How to protect yourself and your family from amebiasis**

- If you are going to visit a country with poor sanitary conditions, drink **only** bottled or boiled water (for one minute) or carbonated (bubbly) drinks in cans or bottles. Do **not** drink fountain drinks or any drinks with ice cubes. Water can also be made safe by filtering it through an “absolute 1 micron or less” filter and dissolving iodine tablets in the filtered water. Camping supply stores carry “absolute 1 micron” filters.
- Amebiasis has been found in unpasteurized milk and untreated water supplies. Do not drink or eat food items from uninspected or unapproved sources.

### **How to wash hands well**

- Rub both hands on the top and bottom with soap for 20 seconds.
- Use paper towels or clean terry cloth towels for drying.
- Use the paper towel to turn off the water faucet in a public place.
- Wash hands carefully after bowel movements or changing diapers. Clean toilet with disinfectant. Clean toilet handle and faucets. Keep towels clean.



## **Amebiasis infection is a reportable illness**

If you are diagnosed with amebiasis infection, your doctor will give a report to the County Health and Human Services Agency. You may be contacted to find out how you got infected. This helps prevent the illness from spreading to others.

This fact sheet includes information on amebiasis reproduced from the Parasite Disease Information section of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at [www.CDC.gov](http://www.CDC.gov).

**To report amebiasis in San Diego County, call (619) 515-6620.**



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